

Seven incumbents returning to Montgomery County Council

Top priority for 2012 appears to be the budget

by Erin Cunningham | Staff Writer

The county's troubled budget will be the top priority for the next Montgomery County Council, winners in the Nov. 2 election said.

Two new members were elected to the council: Craig L. Rice, of Germantown, and Hans Riemer, of Silver Spring.

The new council will be sworn in Dec. 6, and the nine Democratic members will serve four-year terms. The salary for a council member is \$94,351 per year.

Rice was elected to Councilman Michael J. Knapp's seat in District 2. Knapp did not seek re-election, and recently was hired by Gaithersburg as the city's economic development consultant. His contract began Nov. 1.

Riemer is replacing one-term Councilwoman Duchy Trachtenberg (D-At large) of North Bethesda. Riemer defeated Trachtenberg in the Democratic primary.

Trachtenberg has not announced her post-council plans, and she was unavailable to comment for this article.

This week The Gazette spoke with members of the next County Council about their top priorities for the upcoming term:

-Philip M. Andrews (D-Dist. 3) of Gaithersburg ran unopposed this year and was elected to his fourth term. Andrews is the longest-serving council member and serves as chair of its Public Safety Committee — a position Andrews says he hopes to maintain. He said the council's greatest challenge will be to address the county's structural budget deficit while protecting core government services and avoiding tax increases.

-Roger Berliner (D-Dist. 1) of Potomac was elected Nov. 2 to his second term. Berliner, an environmental attorney, says he will focus on transportation issues and the county's budget in his second term. Berliner says a top focus is reducing the number of cars on county roads and ushering more drivers onto mass transit, such as a proposed Bus Rapid Transit line.

-Nancy M. Floreen (D-At large) of Garrett Park was elected to her third term. Floreen has served for the past year as the council's president, a title she will give up in December. In the short-term, Floreen says she is focused on finalizing financing for the White Flint development. In the long-term, she is focused on the county's finances, and specifically

how the county will continue to fund transportation and other projects with limited resources.

-George L. Leventhal (D-At large) of Takoma Park was elected to a third term on the council, where he serves as chair of the Health and Human Services Committee. Leventhal, who has been an advocate for the county's neediest residents, says he would like to continue in that role. His top priority this year will be to encourage jobs and investment in the county, he said, specifically in areas such as biotech and environmental technology.

-Marc B. Elrich (D-At large) of Takoma Park was the top vote-getter in the Democratic primary and the Nov. 2 general election, securing a second term on the council. Elrich has never chaired a council committee, but says he would be interested in a leadership role. His top focus is the county's budget, he said. "If we don't figure out how to deal with that, then there's not much latitude to do other things," Elrich said.

-Nancy Navarro (D-Dist. 4) of Silver Spring was elected Nov. 2 to her first full term on the council. Navarro was elected in a 2009 special election to fill a vacant seat. She said her top priority remains job creation, especially in the Eastern part of the county, which she represents. She also wants to maintain public safety, education and quality county services, she said.

-Valerie Ervin (D-Dist. 5) of Silver Spring was elected to her second term on Nov. 2 and is expected to be named the next council president. Ervin currently chairs the council's Education Committee and serves as a member of its finance committee. Ervin said her top priority is the county's budget and repairing the structural budget deficit.

-Hans Riemer, of Silver Spring, worked for the AARP for two years before leaving earlier this year to focus on his campaign. Riemer also was President Barack Obama's youth director for most of the president's primary campaign, serving from March 2007 to March 2008. Riemer said he would like to serve on the council's finance committee. "I think the first priority is trying to get our fiscal house in order and do it in a way that protects our quality of life," he said.

-Rice, of Germantown, has served as the state delegate in District 15 since 2007. He did not return two calls for comment.